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Ministry of Education

SURREY SIGNS B.C.'S 40TH ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AGREEMENT

SURREY – As part of the Surrey board of education's celebration of National Aboriginal Day, Surrey-Tynehead MLA Dave S. Hayer joined Aboriginal leaders and school district officials at the signing of the Province's 40th Aboriginal education enhancement agreement.

"We want to improve the outcomes of Aboriginal students within the Surrey school district," said Hayer. "This Aboriginal education enhancement agreement will also help to preserve B.C.'s rich Aboriginal culture."

This is Surrey's first such agreement, and promotes Aboriginal students' success by supporting their cultural, academic and social needs. Four major goals have been identified in the agreement:

- To advance the literacy achievement of Aboriginal learners from kindergarten to Grade 12.
- To increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions and culture for all students.
- To enhance Aboriginal students' sense of belonging so they can be more successful.
- To increase the transition rates to work or post-secondary opportunities and to increase graduation rates for Aboriginal students.

"We are proud of the work that the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee has done and look forward to the enhancement agreement assisting the community to improve the educational achievements of Aboriginal children," said Kla-hoy-eya Aboriginal Centre of SAC's president June Laitar. "Collectively, we have a great opportunity to support our Aboriginal learners. It truly does take a community to raise a child and we are pleased with the show of support by the Province of British Columbia and the continued efforts of the Surrey school district."

The Surrey school district serves the second-largest urban Aboriginal population in the province. There are more than 2,800 Aboriginal students in the Surrey school district this year – 4.5 per cent of the district's total enrolment. The district lies within the shared traditional territories of the Katzie and Semiahmoo First Nations.

"This agreement is the fruit of five years of hard work driven by a shared passion and commitment to improve the academic performance of Aboriginal students, as well as the understanding of and respect for Aboriginal history and culture," said Surrey board of education chair Reni Masi. "Our board commends the advisory committee members and our Aboriginal Education department, and trustees look forward to successfully implementing the agreement alongside our partners."

This is the 40th Aboriginal education enhancement agreement completed in B.C. Education enhancement agreements support the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda to build new relationships with First Nations, and to close gaps in health, housing, education and economic opportunities. North Vancouver, which signed an agreement in June 2005, had an Aboriginal completion rate of 54 per cent in 2004/05, which rose to 72 per cent in 2006/07. Fort Nelson, which signed an agreement in February 2006, had an Aboriginal completion rate of 62 per cent in 2004/05, which rose to 84 per cent in 2006/07.

"This Aboriginal education enhancement agreement will help give Aboriginal parents and communities a stronger voice in the education of their children," said Education Minister Shirley Bond. "The Province continues to work with school districts and Aboriginal communities to improve Aboriginal student outcomes, and we are pleased to celebrate this 40th agreement."

Aboriginal education enhancement agreements are one component of the Province's strategy to improve Aboriginal student achievement. Others include the new First Nations education jurisdiction agreement and developing Aboriginal content for K-12 curriculum.

The Province is investing an estimated $51.1 million – $1,014 per student – for Aboriginal education in 2007-08. The funds are used to support Aboriginal language and culture programs, Aboriginal support service programs, and other localized Aboriginal education programs.

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